

Ghana

In Ghana life is public. People evacuate their homes and apartments every day to escape the stifling heat. And much like the kente cloth worn by market women, the disparate parts and peoples somehow mix and weave together into a cohesive whole. Ghana is home to a number of diverse peoples and cultures, all finding ways to coexist in a rapidly modernising country. You'll see men and women in traditional clothes text messaging friends and suited businessmen taking offerings to tribal chiefs.

Compared to other countries in the region, Ghana is stable and prosperous, but this valuation is in part founded on hopes for the future. The country is often labelled 'Africa for beginners', and while you'll likely be welcomed by the people in a hot, sweaty clinch, the same way the sun grabs hold of you the second after you step outside, getting around is by no means easy.

Ghana has no iconic calling card like Victoria Falls or Kilimanjaro, but one look at a map reveals a geographic blessing: hundreds of kilometres of coast shared by beautiful beaches, ruined European forts, the poignant reminders of the country's importance as a way station for African slaves, and the battered shacks of lively fishing villages. Accra is the commercial and cultural motor of the country, while Kumasi is the traditional home of the Ashanti, and is famous for its crafts. In the Volta region to the east, where the geography was given a facelift by the Akosombo dam, you can still find substantial swathes of forest crawling up mountains along the Togo border. And finally the north, which offers opportunities for wildlife viewing up close and personal, stretches across the horizon like an overcooked pancake to the Burkina Faso frontier.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 238,537 sq km
- **ATMs** Available
- **Borders** Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo
- **Budget** US\$30 to US\$50 per day
- **Capital** Accra
- **Languages** English, Twi, Ga and Ewe
- **Money** Cedi; US\$1 = C9200
- **Population** 21 million
- **Seasons** Wet (late April to October), dry (November to late March)
- **Telephone** Country code ☎ 233; international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC
- **Visa** US\$50 in advance or US\$100 upon arrival at airport



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Beach life** (p342) Soak up the rays and Rasta vibe at a beach resort in Axim, Busua, Anomabu or Kokrobite.
- **Past life** (p343 and p344) Tour the castles at Cape Coast and Elmina to learn about the history of slavery.
- **Wildlife** (p349) Engage in a staring contest with a bus-sized elephant in Mole National Park.
- **Hiplife** (p341) Take in Accra's club scene, the birthplace of some of the region's most popular music.
- **Village life** (p349) Rough it in one of the community tourism projects, such as the stilt village at Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Ghana has a tropical equatorial climate, which means that it's hot year-round with seasonal rains. In the humid southern coastal region, the rainy seasons are from April to June, and during September and October; the dry months, November to March or July and August, are easier for travelling. Throughout the year, maximum temperatures are around 30°C, dropping three or four degrees during the brief respite between rainy seasons. The humidity is constantly high, at about 80%.

In the central region, the rains are heavier and last longer. In the hotter and drier north, there is one rainy season, lasting from April to October. Midday temperatures rarely fall below 30°C, rising to 35°C and higher during December to March when the rasping harmattan wind blows in from the Sahara.

The tourist high season is from June to August, which coincides with the summer vacation in the US. The country sees few tourists from September to December.

ITINERARIES

- **Two Weeks** Without private transportation two weeks is really only enough time to do the triangular route bounded by Accra, Takoradi to the west, and Kumasi at the top. Start in Accra (p335; three days), then head to the beach at Anomabu (p342; two nights), then on to Cape Coast (p342; three nights), with day trips to Kakum (p343) and Elmina (p344). If you want to mix things up take the night train from Takoradi (p344) to Kumasi (p345; three nights) to explore

HOW MUCH?

- **Handkerchief** US\$0.20
- **Bottle of Fanta** US\$0.30
- **Music CD** US\$10
- **Inner-city taxi** US\$0.90
- **Coffin in the shape of a Mercedes** US\$550

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L petrol** US\$0.80
- **1L bottled water** US\$0.70
- **Bottle of Star beer** US\$0.50
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$10
- **Beef kebab skewer** US\$0.30

the surrounding area, then head back to Accra.

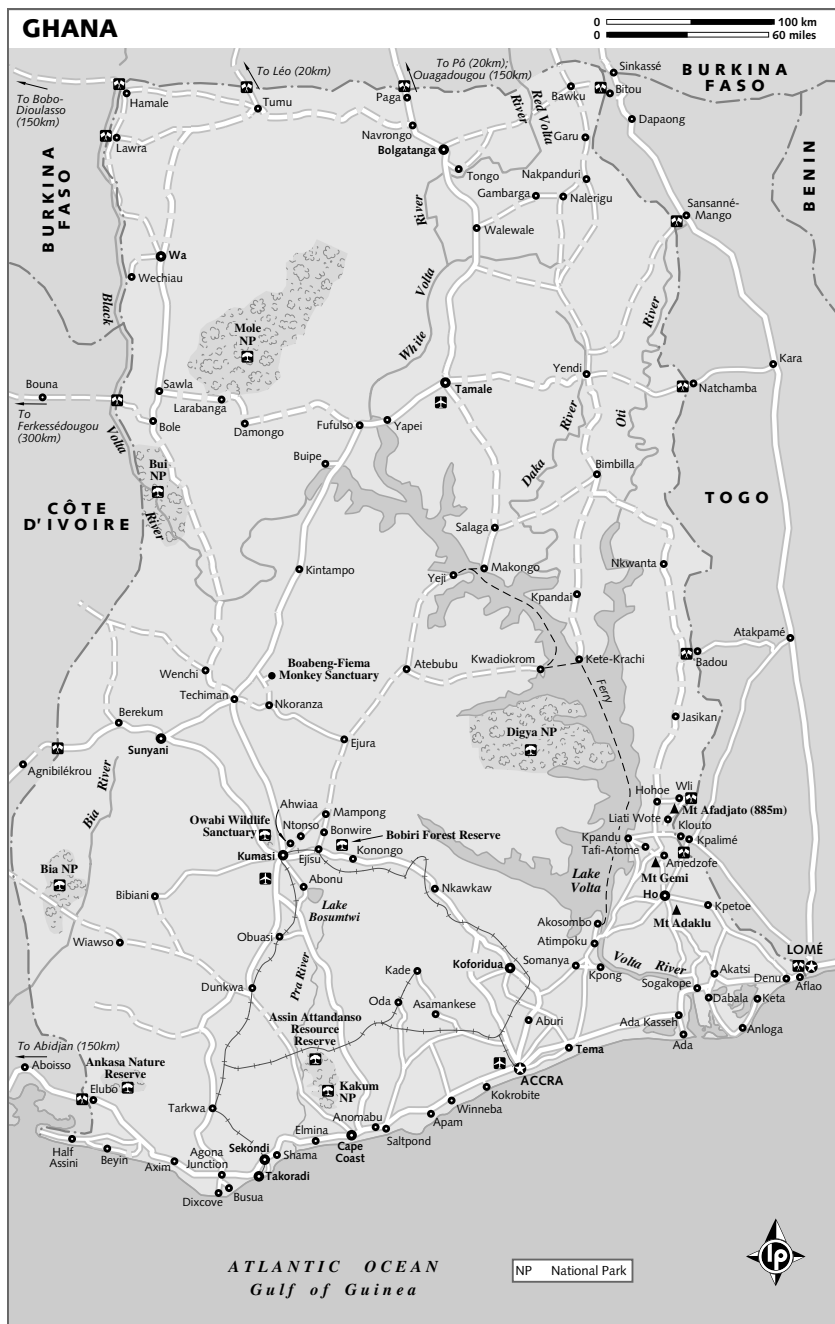
- **One Month** With four weeks to spare, you can do everything in the two-week itinerary plus throw in visits to the coastal resorts at Busua (p344) and those further along the coast, and also explore some of the north. If possible fly from Accra to Tamale (p348; one night) – if not take your time bussing it to Kumasi and then further north – and on to Mole National Park (p349) and Larabanga (p349; two nights). Continue west to the hippo sanctuary at Wechiau (p349), if time permits, and return to Kumasi. From there you can head south to Accra and then visit the east: Akosombo (p350; one night) and Wli Falls (p350) and back to Accra. Alternatively, head directly to the coastal resorts of your choice from Kumasi.

HISTORY

Present-day Ghana has been inhabited since 4000 BC, filled by successive waves of migrants from the north and east. By the 13th century several kingdoms had developed, growing rich from the country's massive gold deposits and gradually expanding south along the Volta River to the coast.

Power & Conflict

By the 16th century one of the kingdoms, the Ashanti, emerged as the dominant power, conquering tribes left, right and centre and



taking control of trade routes to the coast. Its capital, Kumasi, became a sophisticated urban centre, with facilities and services equal to those in Europe at the time. And it wasn't long until the Europeans discovered this African kingdom. First the Portuguese came sniffing around the coast, and then came the British, French, Dutch, Swedes and Danes. They all built forts by the sea and traded slaves, gold and other goods with the Ashanti.

But the slave trade was abolished in the 19th century, and with it went the Ashanti's domination. By that time the British had taken over the Gold Coast, as the area had become called, and began muscling in on Ashanti turf. This sparked several wars between the two powers, which culminated in the British ransacking of Kumasi in 1874. The British then established a protectorate over Ashanti territory, which they expanded in 1901 to include areas to the north. The Gold Coast was now a British colony.

The Road to Independence

By the late 1920s the locals were itching for independence, and they set up political parties dedicated to this aim. However, parties like the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), formed in 1947, were too elitist and detached from those they were meant to represent – the ordinary workers. So the UGCC's secretary-general, Kwame Nkrumah, broke away in 1948 and formed the Conventional People's Party (CPP), which became an overnight success. Nkrumah was impatient for change and called for a national strike in 1949. The British, anxious about his popularity, jailed him. Despite this, the CPP won the elections of 1951, Nkrumah was released and he became prime minister. When Ghana finally won its independence in March 1957, Nkrumah became the first president of an independent African nation. His speeches, which denounced imperialism and talked about a free, united Africa, made him the darling of the Pan-African movement.

Independence & the Nkrumah Years

But back home Nkrumah was not popular among traditional chiefs and farmers, who were unimpressed with the idea of unity under his rule. Factionalism and regional interests created an opposition that Nkrumah tried to contain through repressive laws, and by turning Ghana into a one-party state.

Nkrumah, however, skilfully kept himself out of the fray and concentrated on building prestige projects, such as the Akosombo Dam and several universities and hospitals.

But things started to unravel. Nkrumah expanded his personal bodyguard into an entire regiment, while corruption and reckless spending drove the country into serious debt. Nkrumah, seemingly oblivious to his growing unpopularity, made the fatal mistake of going on a state visit to China in 1966. While he was away his regime was toppled in an army coup. Nkrumah died six years later in exile in Guinea.

Dr Kofi Busia headed a civilian government in 1969, but could do nothing to overcome the corruption and debt problems. Colonel Acheampong replaced him in a 1972 coup, but few things changed under his tenure.

Jerry Rawlings' Regime

By 1979 Ghana was suffering food shortages and people were out on the streets demonstrating against the army 'fat cats'. Onto the scene came Jerry Rawlings: a good-looking, charismatic, half-Scottish air force pilot who kept cigarettes behind his ear and spoke the language of the people. Nicknamed 'Junior Jesus', Rawlings caught the public's imagination with his calls for corrupt military rulers to be confronted and held accountable for Ghana's problems. The military jailed him for his insubordination, but his fellow junior officers freed him after they staged an uprising. Rawlings' Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) then handed over power to a civilian government (after a general election) and started a major 'house-cleaning' operation – that is, executing and jailing senior officers.

The new president, Hilla Limann, was uneasy with Rawlings' huge popularity, and later accused him of trying to subvert constitutional rule. The AFRC toppled him in a coup in 1981, and this time Rawlings stayed in power for the next 15 years.

Although Rawlings never delivered his promised left-wing revolution, he improved the ailing economy after following the orders of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). During part of the 1980s Ghana enjoyed Africa's highest economic growth rates.

The Democratic Era

By 1992 Rawlings was under worldwide pressure to introduce democracy, so he lifted the

10-year ban on political parties and called a general election. However, the hopelessly divided opposition couldn't get their act together, and Rawlings won the 1992 elections freely and fairly, with 60% of the vote. Still licking their wounds, the opposition withdrew from the following month's parliamentary elections, giving Rawlings' newly formed National Democratic Congress (NDC) an easy victory. In 1996 he repeated this triumph in elections that were again considered free and fair.

Ghana Today

After eight years of Rawlings and the NDC (the constitution barred Rawlings from standing for a third term in the 2000 presidential elections), his nominated successor and former vice-president, Professor John Atta Mills, lost to Dr John Kufuor, leader of the well-established New Patriotic Party (NPP), which also won a slim majority in the parliamentary elections. Kufuor and the NPP were victorious again in 2004, which means that each party will have had eight years in power by the time the next national elections roll around.

Kufuor and the NPP inherited some tough economic and political challenges; the party's slogan, 'So Far So Good', is perhaps an uncannily accurate reflection of the confidence they and the country hold. Even though both parties continue to be criticised for cronyism and corruption, Ghana's economy continues to grow and attract investment, and the outlook is brighter than in many other parts of Africa. That being said, in 2005 the per-capita income was an estimated US\$2500 and Ghana is classified by the UN as a low-income, food-deficit country. The majority of very poor people live in rural areas. The bulk of the country's labour force is employed in agriculture, which accounts for 37% of its GDP and 35% of its export earnings.

CULTURE

If there's one feature of Ghanaian society that sticks out more than any other, it has to be religion. The country is 15% Muslim, 70% Christian and 100% obsessed with spiritual worship. This is the land of glory, gold and God, after all, and God is *everywhere*: 'God is Love Hair Salon', 'Jesus Loves Me Forex Bureau' and 'Forgiveness Communications' are just some of the pious names emblazoned

across shop fronts in every town and city throughout the country.

But that's not to say they can't have fun. Ghanaians will find any excuse to dance, and even the most sedate boat rides can turn into a massive party as young men and old grannies gyrate their hips to the musical fusion genres of highlife and hiplife. The latter is a more recent invention that takes a page from the American hip-hop world.

Ghanaians have produced some of Africa's best and most well-known musicians, and this vibrancy is a reflection of a society that is more culturally self-confident than most. Whether it's music, or exquisite Ashanti kente cloth, stools or woodcarvings, Ghanaian products (and imitations of them) are scattered all over West Africa.

Maybe the most famous and arguably the most important Ghanaian is Otunfu Osei II, the king of the Ashanti. He's considered at least as influential as the president, in part because he rules with no term limits and because of his relative youth; he's only in his 50s. Some Ghanaians living abroad send remittances to the king, some money comes from allowances paid by the government, and some of his wealth comes from taxes or tributes given by the people themselves.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Ghana has a rich artistic heritage. Objects are created not only for their aesthetic value but as symbols of ethnic identity or to commemorate historical or legendary events, to convey cultural values or to signify membership of a group. The Akan people of the southern and central regions are famous for their cloth, goldwork, woodcarving, chiefs' insignia (such as swords, umbrella tops and linguist staffs), pottery and bead-making.

ENVIRONMENT

Ghana is about the size of Britain. Much of Ghana's terrain consists of wooded ranges, wide valleys and low-lying coastal plains. The damming of the Volta River in the mid-1960s created the world's largest artificial lake.

Logging, mining, the use of wood fuels and deforestation for agriculture have reduced Ghana's forests from over 8 million sq km in the early 20th century to less than 2 million sq km now. Marine and coastal areas are threatened by high erosion and population concentration.

Population densities are highest within the Accra-Kumasi-Takoradi triangle, largely because of the timber-producing deciduous forests and cocoa-growing lands, which stimulate economic productivity.

Ghana has five national parks and nine protected areas. Mole National Park (p349), in the northwest of the country, protects savannah woodland and is the best place to see wildlife, including elephants, baboons and antelope species. Kakum National Park (p343), just inland of Cape Coast, is known for its canopy walkway and is a good place to see rainforest habitat and birdlife.

FOOD & DRINK

A typical Ghanaian meal consists of a starch staple, such as rice, *fufu* (mashed cassava, plantain or yam), *kenkey* or *banku* (fermented maize meal) eaten with a sauce or stew. Common sauces (called soups) include groundnut, palaver (made from greens) and light soup (egg and tomato sauce with fish or meat). Other menu regulars are fried rice with chicken or vegetables, *jollof* rice (the West African paella) and red, red, bean stew with meat or fish, often served with fried plantains. The meat used is usually chicken, goat or beef; guinea fowl replaces chicken in the north of the country. Grasscutter, a large rodent, is also popular. Fish, usually dried and smoked, is a common component of meals. *Omo tuo*, a special dish served only on Sunday, is mashed rice balls with a fish or meat soup.

ACCRA

☎ 021 / pop 2 million

With its back mostly turned to the Gulf of Guinea, taking little advantage of its waterfront location, Accra crawls up and over a modern landscape, gobbling up real estate and producing a chaotic low-rise skyline. Originally a scattering of villages controlled by Ga chiefs, today it's a sprawling city that extends eastwards almost 25km to the neighbouring city of Tema. Its congested and pockmarked pavements; baking streets that in the midday heat can make a block feel like a kilometre; shanty towns and genteel leafy suburbia; chop bars and gourmet restaurants; hiplife and highlife; all combine to make Accra at once exhausting and exhilarating.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Books for Less (Map p336; 17th Lane, Osu)

EPP Books (Map p336; Burma Camp Rd, Labadi)

Cultural Centres

Alliance Française (Map p336; ☎ 773134; alliance@ghana.com; Liberation Link, Airport Residential Area)

Lectures and cultural events; every Tuesday is movie night.

British Council (Map p338; ☎ 244744; Liberia Rd; www.britishcouncil.org/ghana) Air-con library open to the public. English newspapers and magazines, and lectures and cultural events.

Internet Access

Busy Internet (Map p338; Ring Rd, Asylum Down; per hr US\$1.10; ☎ 24hr) Hi-tech, popular internet café and entertainment centre; great place to watch a movie.

Internet Café (Map p338) Across from the White Bell restaurant, on the left.

Mega Internet (Map p338; Ring Rd, Asylum Down; per hr US\$1.10; ☎ 4.30am-1.30am) Flat-screen computers, all office-related services.

Osu Internet Café (Map p336; Mission St, Osu; per hr US\$0.75; ☎ 24hr)

Sharpnet (Map p336; Ring Rd East, Osu; per hr US\$1.10; ☎ 24hr)

Medical Services

Pharmacies are scattered around everywhere, but as an alternative you can try the supermarkets in Osu.

37 Military Hospital (Map p336; ☎ 776111; Liberation Ave)

North Ridge Clinic (Map p336; ☎ 227328, 024-355366; Ring Rd Central)

Trust Hospital (☎ 776787; Cantonments Rd, Osu)

Money

The head offices of Barclays and Standard Chartered are both on High St (Map p338) and there are several branches around town, all of which have ATMs. Forexes are scattered around the city.

Afro Wings Ltd (Map p338; Farrar Ave) In the Trust Towers complex. Amex representative.

Forbes Forex Bureau (Map p336; Cantonment Rd, Osu)

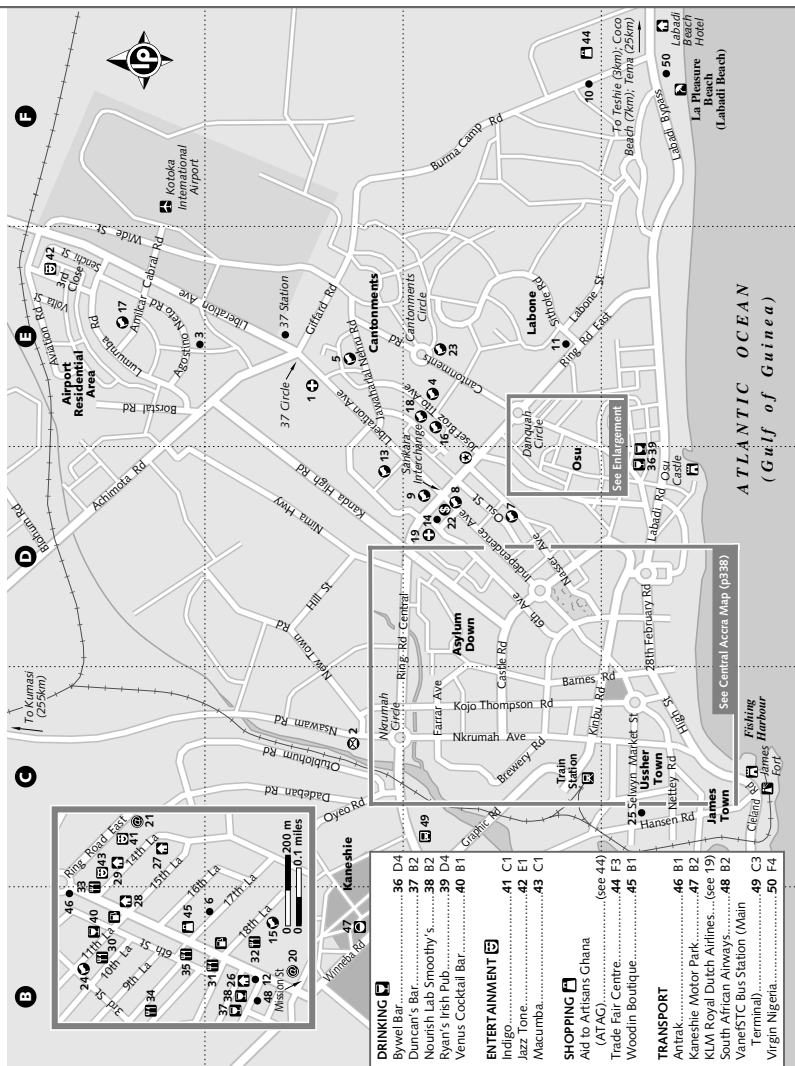
Jibrin Forex Bureau (Map p338; Kojo Thompson Rd, Adabraka)

Star Forex Bureau (Map p338; High St) In the entrance to the Centre for National Culture.

Post

Accra North post office (Map p336; Nsawam Rd) Just north of Nkrumah Circle.

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	Accra North Post Office.....	2 C2
	Alliance Française.....	3 E1
	Australian High Commission.....	4 E1
	Banque Paribas.....	5 E2
	Books for Less.....	6 B2
	British High Commission.....	7 D3
	Canadian High Commission.....	8 D3
	Dutch Embassy.....	9 D3
	EPF Books.....	10 F3
	Expertravel & Tours.....	11 E2
	Forbes Forex Bureau.....	12 B2
	French Embassy.....	13 D2
2	IMMIGRATION OFFICE (Visa Extensions)	14 D3
	Ivorian Embassy.....	15 B2
	Japanese Embassy.....	16 E1
	Liberian Embassy.....	17 E1
	Nigerian Embassy.....	18 E3
	North Ridge Clinic.....	19 D2
	Osu Internet Café.....	20 B2
	Sharpnet.....	21 C1
	Standard Chartered Bank.....	22 D3
	Togolese Embassy.....	23 E3
	US Embassy.....	24 B1
3	SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
	Timber Market.....	25 C4
	SLEEPING	
	Frankie's Hotel.....	26 B2
	Niagara Plus Hotel.....	27 C1
	Penta Hotel.....	28 B1
	Rest Inn.....	29 C1
	EATING	
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	Have!.....	32 B2
	Koala Supermarket.....	33 B1
	Mama Mia's.....	34 B1
	Monsoon.....	35 B1
	Osu Food Court.....	35 B1



Main post office (Map p338; Ussher Town) On the Lutterodt intersection.

Tourist Information

Accra Visitor's Centre (Map p338; ☎ 252186; bentsifi@ighmail.com) Near Mega Internet on Ring Rd Central. Has maps, and is reasonably helpful.

Tourist information counter (☎ 776171, ext 1314; Airport) A small counter in the international arrivals hall at the airport.

Tourist office (Map p338; ☎ 231817; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) This is 50m down Education Close, off Barnes Rd. Not a good source of practical information.

Travel Agencies

Doscar Travel & Tours (Map p338; ☎ 239229; fax 248328; Sedco House, 5 Tabon St) Next to Le Petit Paris Café.

Expertravel & Tours (Map p336; ☎ 775498; fax 773937; Ring Rd East)

M&J Travel & Tours (Map p336; ☎ 773153; fax 774338; 11th Lane, Osu)

WB Travel & Tours (Map p338; ☎ 245900; wbtravel@wwwplus.com; 29 Farrar Ave) Opposite Hotel President.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The gently decaying **National Museum** (Map p338; ☎ 221633; Barnes Rd; adult/student US\$5/2.20; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun), set in shady grounds, has interesting displays on various aspects of Ghanaian culture and history. The displays on royal stools, state umbrellas, swords and *akyeamepoma* (linguist's staffs) are enlightening.

There is no front door or welcoming sign to the **Makola Market** (Map p338). It's a gradual transition from the usual pavements clogged with vendors hawking second-hand clothes and shoes to the market itself, which only becomes obvious once you can't take a step without tripping over a pile of Chinese-made locks or tube socks and you're sucked into the vortex of the swirling crowds.

Independence (Black Star) Square (Map p338) is a vast, baking expanse of concrete dominated by a ginormous McDonalds-like arch, beneath which the Eternal Flame of African Liberation, lit by Nkrumah, still flickers.

Because they are fairly concentrated and walkable, **James Town** and **Ussher Town** (both on Map p336), two of the oldest neighbourhoods in Accra, provide a chance to witness how ordinary Ghanaians go about their everyday lives. These aren't shantytowns like you'd find in Johannesburg or Nairobi, but the people

are undoubtedly poor and you may feel uncomfortably voyeuristic just walking around on your own. Ask a local to take you around; negotiate a fee in advance.

For a great view of the city and the busy and colourful fishing harbour (haze and pollution permitting), climb to the top of the old **lighthouse** (Map p336; admission US\$0.30) near James Fort.

If you're walking back to the centre along Cleland Rd, which becomes High St, you could take a detour along Hansen Rd to see the **Timber Market** (Map p336; ask someone to show you where it is). The fetish section is fascinating, with its animal skulls, live and dead reptiles, strange powders, and juju figurines.

While most of Accra's oceanfront real estate is rocky and undeveloped, there are several sandy beaches. **La Pleasure Beach** (Map p336; admission US\$2.20), also known as Labadi Beach, is about 8km east of central Accra and easily reached by public transport. Unfortunately since the swimming area is so narrow it's a little claustrophobic on weekends.

SLEEPING

Most of the budget accommodation is generally clustered off Kwame Nkrumah and Kojo Thompson Rds in Adabraka. While Osu is the most convenient place to base yourself, rooms there are US\$40 and up and aren't especially good value. The closest you can get to beach or resort-style accommodation are the two top-end hotels at La Pleasure Beach. The Novotel is the nicest place to stay in the city centre.

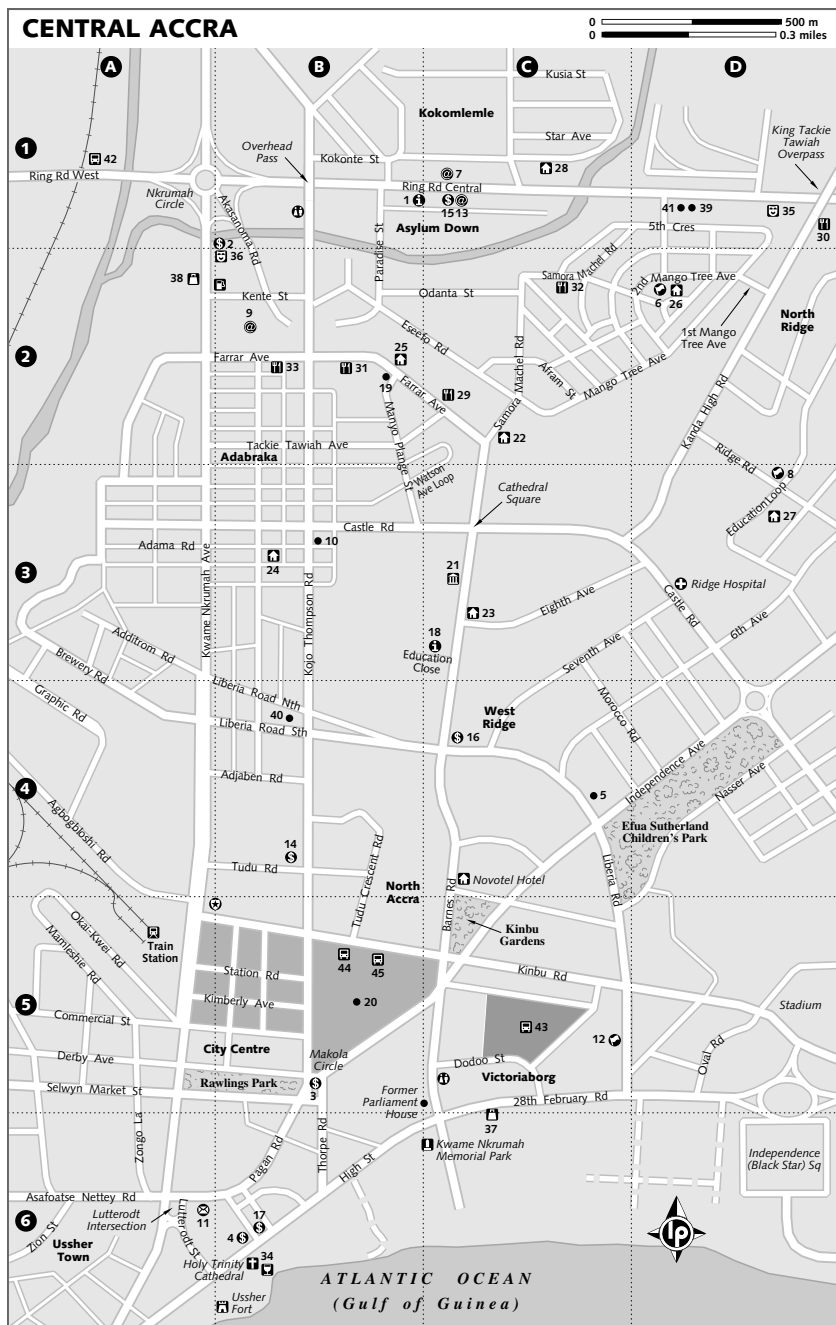
Adabraka

Date Hotel (Map p338; ☎ 228200; Adama Rd, Adabraka; r from US\$9) The concrete courtyard is a drinking spot during the day, and the fan rooms are bare-bare bones. Bring your own bath towel.

Hotel President (Map p338; ☎ 223343; Farrar Ave, Adabraka; r with fan/air-con from US\$15/20; (P)) Despite a grandiose name and a convenient location, this purple multistorey hotel is a little ratty, though the air-con rooms are quite large.

Calvary Methodist Church Guesthouse (Map p338; ☎ 234507; Barnes Rd, West Ridge; r US\$24; (P) ☎) The rooms on the top floor of a building in this compound are divine for the price. Each of the six rooms are spotless and modern and have small balconies.

Beverly Hills Hotel (Map p338; ☎ 224042; Samora Machel Rd; r US\$33; (P) ☎) You won't mistake this



INFORMATION		SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		DRINKING ☑	
Accra Visitor's Centre.....	1 B1	Makola Market.....	20 B5	Champs Sports Bar.....	(see 28)
Afro Wings Ltd.....	(see 29)	National Museum.....	21 C3	Osekan.....	34 B6
Barclays Bank.....	2 B1	SLEEPING ☑		ENTERTAINMENT ☑	
Barclays Bank.....	3 B5	Beverly Hills Hotel.....	22 C2	Bass Line.....	35 D1
Barclays Bank (Head Office).....	4 B6	Calvary Methodist Church		Vienna City Entertainment	
British Council.....	5 C4	Guesthouse.....	23 C3	Complex.....	36 B2
Burkinabé Embassy.....	6 D2	Date Hotel.....	24 B3	SHOPPING ☑	
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Doscar Travel & Tours.....	(see 30)	Korkdam Hotel.....	26 D2	Culture.....	37 C6
German Embassy.....	8 D3	North Ridge		Loom.....	38 A2
Internet Café.....	9 B2	Hotel.....	27 D3	TRANSPORT	
Jibrin Forex Bureau.....	10 B3	Paloma Hotel.....	28 C1	Alitalia.....	39 D1
Main Post Office.....	11 A6	EATING ☑		British Airways.....	40 B4
Malian Embassy.....	12 C5	Choos Eatery.....	29 C2	Lufthansa Airlines.....	41 D1
Mega Internet.....	13 C1	Edvy Restaurant.....	(see 21)	Neoplan Motor	
Standard Chartered Bank.....	14 B4	Le Petit Paris.....	30 D1	Park.....	42 A1
Standard Chartered Bank.....	15 C1	Orangery.....	31 B2	Tema Station.....	43 C5
Standard Chartered Bank		Paloma		Tudu Station.....	44 B5
(Head Office).....	17 B6	Restaurant.....	(see 28)	VanefSTC Bus Station (to Ho,	
Star Forex Bureau.....	(see 37)	Spicy Chicken.....	32 C2	Hohoe & Aflao).....	45 B5
Tourist Office.....	18 C3	White Bell.....	33 B2		
WB Travel & Tours.....	19 B2				

centrally located hotel for the Four Seasons, though its rooms are large and the furnishings are comfortable.

Osu

Rest Inn (Map p336; ☎ 785543; www.therestinn.com; 14th Lane; r US\$45; ☑ ☒) As far as Osu goes, this is as good value as you'll find. Right around the corner from the Koala supermarket, and behind the art gallery, are several small, clean and modern rooms.

Niagara Plus Hotel (Map p336; ☎ 772428; 14th Lane; s/d US\$50/66; ☑ ☒) This friendly hotel is down a quiet lane about 200m from Cantonments Rd. Rooms are large and comfortable in this especially attractive whitewashed villa with a cobblestone courtyard.

Penta Hotel (Map p336; ☎ 774529; Cantonment Rd; s/d US\$60/70; ☑ ☒) This hotel in the heart of Osu craziness is professionally run though at the expense of warmth or character. The small, modern rooms aren't especially good value. Tycoon restaurant and Hemingway's Bar attached.

Frankie's Hotel (Map p336; ☎ 773567; www.frankiesghana.com; Cantonments Rd; s/d US\$65/85; ☑ ☒ ☒) Above the excellent eatery of the same name, Frankie's has little atmosphere though everything is immaculate, including the basic, modern rooms.

Asylum Down & North Ridge

Korkdam Hotel (Map p338; ☎ 226797; korkdam@africaonline; 2nd Mango Tree Ave, Asylum Down; s/d with fan US\$13/20, r with air-con US\$27; ☑) Only a thin wall

separates your cell from your neighbour's and the water pressure is lousy. Still it's a better choice than next-door Lemon Lodge.

North Ridge Hotel (☎ 225809; nrhotel@hotmail.com.gh; 49 Examination Loop; s/d US\$50/60; ☑ ☒) The friendly North Ridge is a large building on a quiet residential street; the tile-floored rooms have some character even though the furniture is old.

Paloma Hotel (Map p338; ☎ 228700; paloma@africaonline.com.gh; Ring Rd Central; s/d US\$50/70; ☑ ☒) Part of a popular complex that includes a restaurant (see p340), courtyard café and bar (Champs Sports Bar; p340), the hotel has attractive, tastefully decorated rooms.

EATING

Accra has the best choice of restaurants in the country, and the food will seem like *haute cuisine* if you're returning to the city after time spent elsewhere in Ghana. Osu is China Town, Little Italy and your mall food court rolled into one long clogged road.

If you're self-catering, the supermarkets in Osu are best, especially **Koala Supermarket** (Map p336; Cantonments Rd), just off Danquah Circle at the top of Cantonments Rd.

Adabraka

Orangery (Map p338; Farrar Ave; mains US\$2.70-8) The Orangery is a pretty-looking place specialising in sweet and savoury pancakes, muffins, waffles and crepes. Nonbreakfast specialities include moussaka (US\$5) and seafood bouillabaisse (US\$8).

Choos Eatery (Map p338; 2nd fl, Trust Bldg, Farrar Ave; mains US\$3.30) Choos features an open-air dining area that gets a cool breeze, and a large selection of Ghanaian dishes and burgers (US\$2.20).

Edvy Restaurant (Map p338; Barnes Rd; mains US\$3.30; ☎ 9am-4pm) For a postmuseum bite, sit at one of the trellis-covered tables in the grounds of the National Museum. The menu is a small selection of Ghanaian basics.

White Bell (Map p338; Farrar Ave; mains US\$3.80) The White Bell's 2nd-floor dining area catches some cooling breezes and is deservedly popular. Serves burgers, sandwiches and chicken and rice dishes. Music and dancing in the evening.

Osu

Osu Food Court (Map p336; Cantonments Rd; ☎) A mini mall with Nando's (a South African chain doing spicy Portuguese-style chicken), a coffee shop and bakery, a pizza joint and a couple of fried-chicken places.

Frankie's (Map p336; Cantonments Rd; mains US\$3.30-6.50; ☎) An Accra institution, the upstairs restaurant serves burgers, pizzas and fried chicken, as well as a selection of salads, baguettes and sandwiches.

Buku (Map p336; 10th Lane; mains US\$3.80-10) Ghanaian, Nigerian, Togolese and Senegalese specials are lovingly prepared at Buku, where the stylish 2nd-floor open-air dining area is reason alone for coming.

Haveli (Map p336; 18th La; mains US\$5.50-9; ☎) There's no bells and whistles and in fact little decoration at this friendly Indian restaurant in the heart of Osu. It has a big menu serving Indian standards.

Dynasty Restaurant (Map p336; ☎ 775496; Cantonments Rd; mains US\$6-12; ☎) A fancy place as far as Accra restaurants go, the Dynasty specialises in Peking cuisine. Dim sum every Sunday afternoon.

Mama Mia's (Map p336; ☎ 264151; 7th Lane; pizza US\$7-10) Expats swear by the thin-crust, wood-oven-cooked pizza here. The pleasant outdoor garden dining area makes everything taste better. Spaghetti and kid-friendly chicken fingers also served.

Monsoon (Map p336; ☎ 782307; Oxford St; mains US\$11; ☎) Incongruously located above a fast-food court, Monsoon is Accra's most upscale restaurant. The menu includes interesting items like warthog filet (US\$13) and crocodile tail (US\$14). You may get snooty

looks if you're dressed for *tro-tros* (minibuses or pick-ups). A more casual cigar lounge and sushi bar is attached.

Asylum Down & North Ridge

Le Petit Paris (Map p338; Kanda High Rd; croissants US\$1.30; ☎) An excellent spot for a morning coffee and croissant, Le Petit Paris is a simple bakery selling excellent baked goods. Grab an espresso for a nice sit-down breakfast.

Spicy Chicken (Map p338; Samora Machel Rd, Asylum Down; mains US\$3) Fast food and fried chicken.

Paloma Restaurant (Map p338; Ring Rd Central; mains US\$5.50; ☎) Part of the hotel and bar complex, the Paloma serves a variety of food, including pizzas, Lebanese and Ghanaian food, and has a garden bar and restaurant area.

DRINKING

Most drinking spots in Accra are nothing more than a few plastic tables and a Star beer sign; Osu has the highest concentration.

Nourish Lab Smoothys (Map p336; 3rd Lane; smoothies US\$2.20; ☎ 8am-10pm) These refreshing drinks, a combination of fruit and soft yogurt, are practically addictive because of the oppressive heat. Also serves sandwich wraps and salads.

Osekan (Map p338; High St) Spend a sunset nursing a cold Star at one of Osekan's cliffside tables and you'll probably agree there's no better place in Accra for a drink. Walk through the large, empty lot, down the steep steps to the bar.

Champs Sports Bar (Map p338; Ring Rd Central; ☎) Part of the Paloma Hotel complex, this expat-friendly pub beams in sports from abroad. Thursday is quiz night, Friday is karaoke night, Saturday is live-music night and Sunday movie night. Also serves Mexican food.

Bywel Bar (Map p336; Cantonments Rd, Osu) Live music Thursday and Saturday nights transforms this cool hang-out at the southern end of Cantonments Rd into a fun party.

Ryan's Irish Pub (Map p336; Osu; ☎) More Irish pub than an Irish pub, this large green-and-yellow colonial building in the south of Osu serves draught Guinness and hearty food. Live music on weekends.

Venus Cocktail Bar (Map p336; 11th Lane, Osu) This spot with a nice little bamboo bar, attached to the Byblos Hotel, is popular with Peace Corps types and other long-term volunteers.

Duncan's Bar (Map p336; 3rd Lane, Osu) Nothing more than a few plastic tables out on the

street, Duncan's is nevertheless a popular drinking spot with locals.

ENTERTAINMENT

Accra is Ghana's biggest city and the birthplace of highlife, hiplife and other hybrid music genres, so it's not surprising there's a lively club scene. The action rarely starts before 10pm or 11pm.

Jazz Tone (Map p336; Third Close, Airport Residential Area) A popular place with good live jazz music.

Indigo (Map p336; Ring Rd East, Osu) Near Danquah Circle, this stylish place is housed in an old embassy building and attracts Accra's trendsetters. Friday and Saturday are the best nights.

Macumba (Map p336; Ring Rd East, Osu) One of Accra's nightlife institutions, Macumba is just off Danquah Circle and is popular with European discophiles.

Bass Line (Map p338; Ring Rd Central, North Ridge) Another good hip jazz club, the Bass Line, just west of Kanda High Rd, gets smoky and stays open late.

Vienna City Entertainment Complex (Map p338; Kwame Nkrumah Ave, Adabraka) A massive bar, game room and club in the heart of Adabraka near Nkrumah Circle.

SHOPPING

Centre for National Culture (Arts Centre; Map p338; ☎ 664099; 28th February Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) A warren of stalls selling arts and crafts and known simply as the Arts Centre, this is the place to shop in Accra and the most visited site in the country. The level of aggressive hassling may make you want to keep your cedis in your pocket but if you have the patience and wherewithal, you can come away with good-quality handicrafts from all over Ghana.

Woodin Boutique (Map p336; Cantonments Rd, Osu) A chic and modern fabric shop.

Loom (Map p338; ☎ 224746; 117 Kwame Nkrumah Ave) This place, 200m south of Nkrumah Circle, sells moderately to expensively priced paintings as well as woodcarvings, fabrics and statues.

The **Trade Fair Centre** (Map p336; off Burma Camp Rd, La) has several stores selling high-quality goods at fixed prices, or try **Aid to Artisans Ghana** (ATAG; Map p336; ☎ 771325; atag@ataggh.com; Trade Fair Centre, off Burma Camp Rd, La; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat), an NGO that offers practical assistance to Ghanaian artisans for crafts and furniture.

Around the Tema road in Teshie are several coffin workshops, where trippy-looking

coffins are fashioned in the shape of lobsters, Mercedes, guns, aeroplanes – whatever is meaningful for the client.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Kotoka international airport, 5km from the city centre, is served by a number of major airlines and several small private regional carriers.

For more information, see p353.

Bus & Tro-tro

There are two VanefSTC bus stations in Accra. The main **VanefSTC bus station** (Map p336; ☎ 227373) is just east of Lamptey Circle and serves destinations to the west and north. Buses leave hourly from early morning to early evening for both Kumasi (ordinary/luxury US\$5/7, four hours) and Takoradi (US\$4.20/5.50, four hours), and four times a day to Cape Coast (US\$2.70/4.20, three hours) and Tamale (US\$10/16, 12 hours). There are fewer trips on all routes on Sundays.

The second, smaller VanefSTC bus station (Map p338) is next to Tudu Station, at the northern end of Makola Market. From there buses head east, serving Ho (US\$4.40, four hours, 3pm), Hohoe (ordinary/luxury US\$3.30/5.50, 3½ hours) and Aflao (US\$5, 4½ hours, four times a day), on the Togo border. Buses leaving from this station are generally much more unreliable and may leave hours after their scheduled departure time or simply not at all.

Private buses and *tro-tros* leave from four main motor parks. Those for Cape Coast, Takoradi and other destinations to the west leave from Kaneshie motor park (Map p336). Neoplan motor park (Map p338), 250m west of Nkrumah Circle, has buses to north points such as Kumasi and Tamale. From Tema station (Map p338), east of Makola market, *tro-tros* leave for Tema and Aburi. From the chaotic Tudu station (Map p338), at the northeast corner of Makola Market, *tro-tros* leave for destinations to the east.

Train

For details, see p355.

GETTING AROUND

Depending on your negotiating abilities and patience, the fare from the airport into the city centre can range from US\$2.20 to US\$7.50. Anything under US\$4.40 is fair.

Line taxis and *tro-tros* travel on fixed runs from major landmarks or between major circles, such as Danquah, 37 and Nkrumah (usually just called 'Circle'). Fares are fixed and are typically about US\$0.10.

Taking taxis in Accra is convenient but since there are no meters the unavoidable haggling can get tiring. Any ride within the city shouldn't cost more than US\$1.10. Rates rise at night.

THE COAST

KOKROBITE

☎ 027

Many travellers looking for a little R&R from Accra, only 32km away, or the rigours of travel elsewhere in the country swear by the long stretch of white sand and the laid-back backpacker/Rasta vibe at Kokrobite.

The renowned Academy of African Music & Arts (AAMAL) offers courses (from two hours to three months) in traditional African music, drumming, and dance and live performances on some weekend afternoons.

It's not advisable to walk on the beach with valuables at night.

A home away from home for many volunteers and West Africa overlanders, the basic concrete cottages with shared bathrooms at **Big Milly's Backyard** (Wendy's; ☎ 607998; www.bigmilly.com; camping with own/rented tent US\$2.70/3.80, s/d without bathroom US\$7/11, r US\$16; Ⓟ) are fine, though most people spend their days and nights at the 24-hour bar and restaurant or the beach. Drumming, dancing and music happen most weekend nights. Just across the dirt road from Sobamba, **Andy's Akwaaba Lodge** (☎ 277261; www.akwaabalodge.com; r with/without bathroom US\$14/7.50; Ⓟ) offers five basic concrete rooms set in a pleasant, small grassy compound where you can also camp with your own tent for US\$3.30.

A beautiful 20-minute walk along the beach from Big Milly's – a road goes here as well – takes you to the seemingly abandoned **Kokrobite Beach Resort** (AAMAL; ☎ 380854; s/d US\$10/12; Ⓟ) famed for the attached music school. The large rooms are old but the warped wooden floors somehow make it charming. A low-key alternative to Big Milly's and just down the road, friendly **Sobamba Coastal Resort** (☎ 683084; r US\$20; Ⓟ) has four basic tiled rooms with modern bathrooms.

Tro-tros (US\$0.60, 45 minutes) to Kokrobite go from the western end of Kaneshie motor park (Donsoman Station) in Accra. Depending on your ability to negotiate, a taxi from Accra will cost from US\$5.50 to US\$11.

ANOMABU

☎ 042

As far as tourists are concerned, Anomabu means an excellent resort on a beautiful beach. However, residents of this very unpicturesque, cramped fishing village about 18km northeast of Cape Coast live in fairly makeshift squalor. **Fort William**, on the seafront in the town centre, was built by the British in 1753 and is now an unphotographable prison.

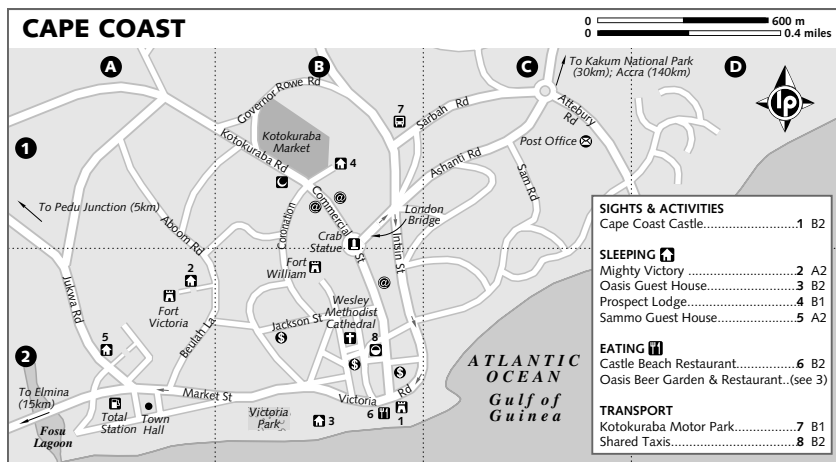
The **Anomabu Beach Resort** (☎ 91562; www.anomabo.digitafrica.com; camp sites own/rented tent US\$4/13, hut with/without air-con US\$38/20; Ⓟ) is the perfect weekend getaway from Accra. One of the few places in Ghana to embrace low-key native architecture rather than big concrete eyesores, it has cosy bungalows set within a sandy and shady grove of coconut palms. But you'll spend most of your time lounging on the beautiful white-sand beach or chowing down on seafood at the exquisite wood pavilion restaurant. For a bird's eye view of the ocean and town below, **Weda Lodge** (☎ 806958; r with fan/air-con US\$26/33; Ⓟ), perched high at the top of a hill, is a nice alternative to the beach resort. There are spectacular views from some of the rooms; it's off the same road and within walking distance of the Anomabu Beach Resort.

From Cape Coast, take a *tro-tro* (US\$0.50, 15 minutes) from Kotokuraba motor park heading for Mankessim and ask to be dropped at the Ebenezer Rest Stop for Anomabu town or at the turn-off for the beach resort, which is about 2km west of the Ebenezer. From the turn-off, it's about 500m to the resort gates. The main *tro-tro* and shared taxi stop in Anomabu is just east of the Ebenezer and plenty of vehicles run in both directions along the coastal road.

CAPE COAST

☎ 042

The centre of Cape Coast, the former British colonial capital, is lined with neglected, faded buildings. Their ages are irrelevant in this now-vibrant town, whose history – Cape Coast was the largest slave-trading centre in West Africa – only becomes apparent after a



visit to the massive **Cape Coast Castle** (adult/student US\$7/4, still/video camera fee US\$0.50/1.10; ☎ 9am-5pm) in the heart of town, overlooking the sea. Extensively restored, the whitewashed castle now houses a superb and moving museum. A guided tour is offered with your admission and should not be missed; allow a minimum of an hour for the tour.

Sleeping & Eating

Sammo Guest House (☎ 33242; Jukwa Rd; r US\$8) Backpackers flock to Sammos, a compound within walking distance of the city centre, to the east. There are simple but clean fan rooms of various size, and a rooftop terrace restaurant popular for the sunset views and social scene.

Oasis Guest House (☎ 35958; ali_d@gmx.d; s/d with-out bathroom US\$9/13, bungalows US\$22; ☎) The only beachfront place in Cape Coast, Oasis has several comfortable rondavels set in a grassy compound. Dancing and drumming classes are held, and the restaurant (mains US\$3.80) and bar areas are some of the best places to meet other travellers in town.

Mighty Victory (☎ 30135; gh72@aol.com; Aboom Cl; s/d with fan US\$18/21, r with air-con US\$24; ☎) The Mighty Victory has a tranquil garden out front and is far removed from the noise of the centre; however, the rooms aren't a big step up qualitywise from Sammo.

Prospect Lodge (☎ 31506; prospectlodge2005@hotmail.com; s/d US\$25/35; ☎ ☎) This new hotel perched on a hill up a steep driveway off Commercial St is easily the nicest place in the city centre.

Rooms here are small but modern and have cable TV. It also has a restaurant (mains US\$4.40 to US\$6.50) with good views of town.

Castle Beach Restaurant (mains US\$3.30) There's no more pleasant spot to hang out and grab some food and drinks than this wooden pavilion overlooking the beach next to the Cape Coast Castle.

Getting There & Away

The VanefSTC bus station is in the Goil petrol station at Pedu junction, about 5km north-west of the town centre. There are buses twice daily to and from Accra (ordinary/luxury US\$2.70/4.20, three hours) and Takoradi (US\$1.30, one hour), and once a day to and from Kumasi (US\$7, four hours).

The Kotokuraba motor park, near the market, has *tro-tros* serving destinations around Cape Coast, such as Anomabu (US\$0.50, 15 minutes), Kakum National Park (US\$0.70, 45 minutes) and Takoradi (US\$1.40, one hour). Shared taxis to Elmina (US\$0.40, 15 minutes) leave from the station on Commercial St, opposite the Cape Café.

KAKUM NATIONAL PARK

☎ 042

Gingerly sliding across a rope bridge at dizzying heights is not for the agoraphobic. But for an easily earned adrenaline rush, the canopy walkway at this **national park** (☎ 33278; admission US\$0.20; ☎ 8am-4pm), 33km north of Cape Coast, shouldn't be missed. The park, together with the neighbouring Assin Attandanso Resource

Reserve, protects 357 sq km of diverse and dense vegetation and is home to varied wildlife, about 300 species of birds and a staggering 600 varieties of butterfly. However, don't come expecting great wildlife viewing, since you'll almost certainly be disappointed.

The 350m rope and cable **canopy walkway** (adult/student US\$10/5.50) consists of seven viewing platforms linked by a circuit of narrow suspension bridges, along which you sway, 30m above the forest floor.

A guided hike in the park costs US\$4.40/2.20 per hour for adults/students. Guided night walks need to be arranged in advance; call ☎ 30265 or fax 33042.

Most people visit Kakum as a day trip from Cape Coast, but if you want to stay you can sleep on a tree platform at the camp site near the park headquarters for US\$9 per person; equipment hire (sleeping mat, sleeping bag, flashlight and mosquito net) costs US\$5.50.

The **Kakum Rainforest Café** (mains US\$4.40) serves basic continental breakfast and Ghanaian dishes for lunch.

From Cape Coast, *tro-tros* (US\$0.70, 45 minutes) that go past the entrance to the park leave from Kotokuraba station on Governor Rowe Rd. It's a five-minute walk from the main road to the park headquarters. Alternatively, you could charter a taxi for about US\$16 round trip.

ELMINA

☎ 042 / pop 20,000

Much more picturesque than Cape Coast, its neighbour 15km to the east, the small town of Elmina is the site of **St George's Castle** (adult/student US\$7/4, still/video camera fee US\$0.50/1.10; ☎ 9am-4.30pm), built by the Portuguese in 1482 and the oldest European structure still standing in sub-Saharan Africa. It was expanded when slaves replaced gold as the major object of commerce, and the storerooms were converted into dungeons. It is now a Unesco World Heritage Monument.

Facing St George's Castle across the lagoon is the much smaller **Fort St Jago** (admission US\$1.10; ☎ 9am-5pm), also a Unesco World Heritage Site, built by the Dutch between 1652 and 1662 to protect the castle.

Just past the Elmina beach resort, the **Almond Tree Guesthouse** (☎ 37365; www.almond3.com; r from US\$30; ☎ ☎) is highly recommended and has several large rooms with wicker furniture. Another good choice found opposite St George's

Castle is the **Coconut Grove Bridge House** (☎ 34557; Liverpool St; d US\$30-50; ☎ ☎). It's a converted old mansion that would blend in on a narrow London street; rooms are comfortable and modern. A good restaurant is attached.

As you'd expect, the **Castle Restaurant** (mains US\$3.80) is within the castle walls and serves Ghanaian dishes – slowly.

The main taxi and *tro-tro* station is outside the Wesley Methodist Cathedral. From here you can get *tro-tros* to Takoradi (US\$1.10) or shared taxis (US\$0.30, 15 minutes) to Cape Coast.

TAKORADI

☎ 031

While Takoradi lacks any tourist sights and the beach is narrow, rocky or nonexistent, there are several good hotels and restaurants, and it's the transport hub west of Cape Coast.

Centrally located **Super Star Hotel & Restaurant** (☎ 23105; Ashanti Rd; r with fan/air-con US\$18/24) is an oasis of air-conditioned calm amid the hot and dusty market area. It has a good modern restaurant on the ground floor. Well located at the edge of central Takoradi, the **Taadi Hotel** (☎ 31104; Wiawso Rd; r US\$20; ☎ ☎) stands out because of its friendly and attentive service. The **Raybow International Hotel** (☎ 25438; raybowhotel@yahoo.com; r US\$50; ☎ ☎ ☎) has chalets with high-quality amenities and the charming restaurant serves some of the best food in town.

The **Akroma Plaza Restaurant** (Accra Rd; mains US\$3.80), a cross between a large banquet hall and an institutional cafeteria, has a big menu. Seafood is the speciality at **Captain Hook's Bar & Restaurant** (Africana Roundabout; mains US\$7.50-22), probably the best and certainly the most expensive in Takoradi.

STC buses leave for Accra several times a day (ordinary/luxury US\$4.20/5.50, four hours), and regularly go to Kumasi (US\$7, six hours). At the top of Axim Rd, near the traffic circle, is a *tro-tro* park serving destinations west of Takoradi, for *tro-tros* to the east head to the station north of Market Circle.

For information on trains between Takoradi and Accra or Kumasi, see p355.

BUSUA & DIXCOVE

☎ 031

These two fishing villages, only 30km or so west of Takoradi and an easy drive from Accra, boast some of the nicest beaches in

Ghana. Busua, the more developed of the two villages as far as tourism goes, is blessed with a long, sandy stretch and water that is ideal for swimming and even a little surfing. There is now even more reason to head down this way thanks to the addition of two low-key bungalow hang-outs near Dixcove, also the site of the picturesque **Fort Metal Cross** (admission US\$1.10, camera fee US\$0.50; ☎ 9am-5pm), which overlooks the port.

If you head east along the beach from Busua, after about 2km you will reach the settlement of Butre, site of the ruined Fort Batenstein.

Sleeping & Eating

Green Turtle Lodge (☎ 893566; www.greenturtlelodge.com; camping with own tent US\$2.70, dm US\$5.50, r with/without bathroom US\$22/11) The ecologically minded Green Turtle is on a palm-lined beach and has spacious, clean bungalows with showers open to the sun and stars. Green Turtle is 10km west of Dixcove near the village of Akwidaa.

Ellis Hideout (☎ 290456; www.ellishideout.com; camping with own tent US\$2.70, dm US\$5.50, bungalows US\$20) A few minutes from Butre, separated by a short canoe ride, this beachfront mini-village has beautifully crafted bungalows and a restaurant serving up good food.

Alaska Beach Club (rondavels with/without bathroom US\$22/9.50; (P)) The oddly named Alaska (considering it's on a beach and it's always hot) is the best value in Busua. Each of the simple round huts and shared bathroom facilities are kept clean.

African Rainbow Resort (☎ 32149; www.africanrainbow.net; s/d with fan US\$45/50, with air-con US\$60/65; (P)) Across the street from the beach, the African Rainbow has large, clean rooms with balconies, plus a rooftop bar and a nicely decorated ground-floor restaurant.

Getting There & Away

Busua and Dixcove are each about 12km from the main coastal road. There's no direct transport to and from either Busua or Dixcove; you have to get to Agona junction on the main road and then take a *tro-tro* or shared taxi from there. From Takoradi, regular *tro-tros* (US\$0.70, 45 minutes) leave for Agona junction. From Agona junction there is frequent transport (US\$0.30) to Busua and Dixcove. A private taxi between Busua and Takoradi will cost around US\$9.

THE CENTRE

KUMASI

☎ 051 / pop 1 million

At one time the capital of the rich and powerful Ashanti kingdom, today Kumasi is a bustling multiethnic metropolis. Unlike Accra, Kumasi, which spills over a series of hills, has a clearly demarcated centre, ground zero being an enormous throbbing daily market. The demographic complexity of the city may not be obvious at first glance but the city is a patchwork of ethnic neighbourhoods. Almost half the residents are Muslims and almost half speak Hausa, a language originating in Nigeria.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Easylink Internet (☎ 9am-11pm) Across from the Alliance Française.

Internet Link (Prempeh II Rd) Just down the street from Vic Baboo's Café.

Shell Internet (per hr US\$1.20; ☎ 7am-9pm) Entrance around back of Shell petrol station.

Unic Internet (per hr US\$0.70; ☎ 7.30am-8.30pm) Next to the British Council.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Pharmacies are dotted around town.

Okomfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (Bantama Rd) A large complex near the National Culture Centre; Kumasi's main public hospital.

MONEY

All banks listed here change travellers cheques and have ATMs. There are also several forexes for changing cash.

Barclays Bank head office (Prempeh II Roundabout)
Garden City Forex Bureau (Harper Rd) Has the best rates around.

Ghana Commercial Bank (Harper Rd)

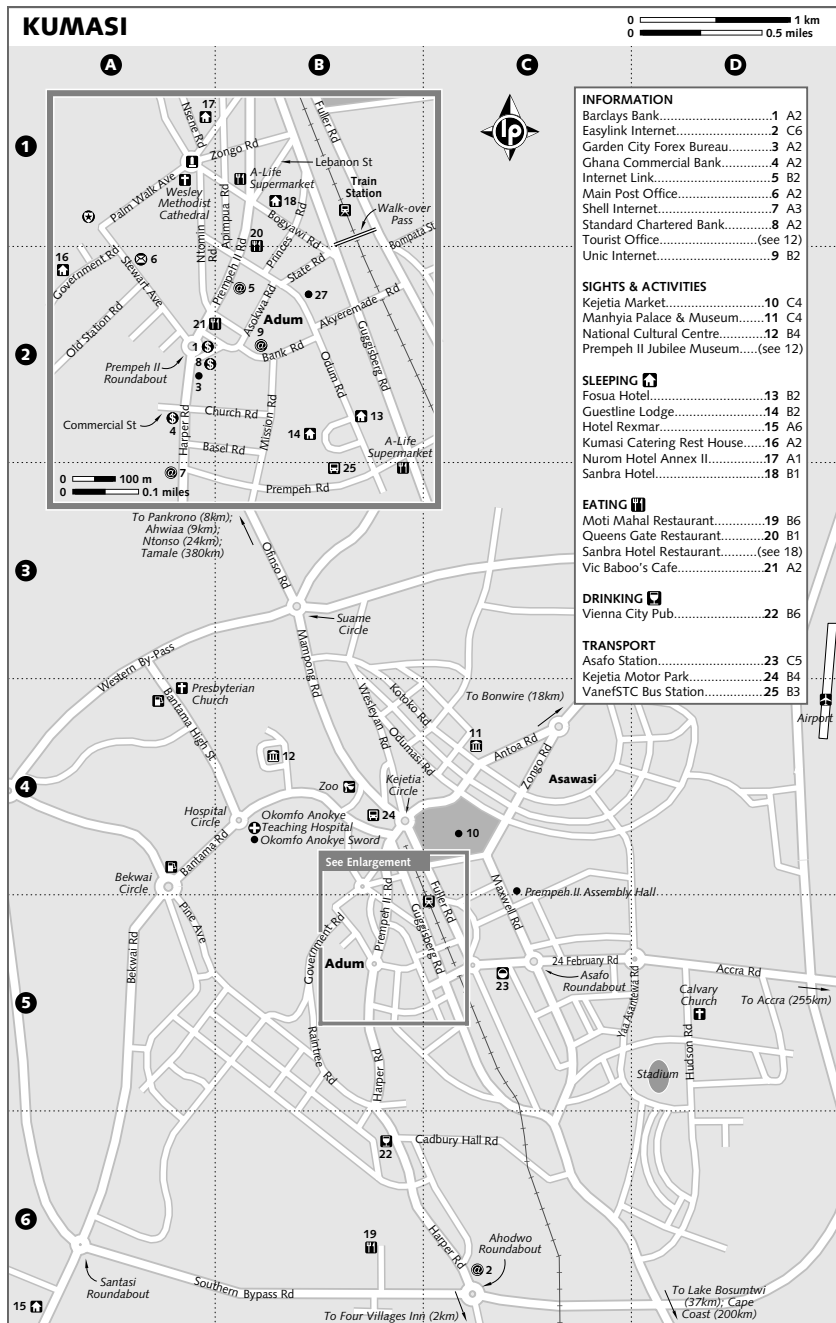
Standard Chartered Bank head office (Prempeh II Roundabout)

POST

Main post office (Stewart Ave; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Opposite the Armed Forces Museum. Poste restante shuts at 4.30pm.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 26243; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri) In the National Cultural Centre complex. Staff can help arrange guided tours of the city and surrounding villages.



Sights

The rusting tin roofs of **Kejetia Market**, often cited as the largest in West Africa, look like a circular shantytown. Once you take a breath and step down into its interior, it's infinitely disorienting but also throbbing with life and commerce.

The **National Cultural Centre** (admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm) is set within spacious grounds off Bantama Rd and includes a model Ashanti village; craft workshops (hours are irregular); a gallery and crafts shop; the regional library; the tourism office; and the small but excellent **Prempeh II Jubilee Museum** (adult/student US\$1.10/2.20; ☎ 2-5pm Mon, 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun), which is a fascinating introduction to Ashanti culture and history.

To get a feel for how a modern Ashanti ruler lives, visit **Manhyia Palace** and its **museum** (adult/student US\$2.20/1.10; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm) off Antoa Rd, up the hill north from Kejetia Circle. The palace was used by the Ashanti kings until 1974. Among the displays are unnervingly lifelike life-size wax models of the two kings and their mothers and of the most redoubtable queen mother Yaa Asantewaa, who led the 1900 revolt against the British and who died in exile in the Seychelles.

Festivals & Events

The Ashanti calendar is divided into nine cycles of 42 days called *Adae*, which means 'resting place'. There are two special days of worship within each *Adae* when a celebration is held and no work is done. The most important annual festival is the **Odwira festival**, which marks the last or ninth *Adae*. The festival features lots of drumming, horn-blowing, food offerings and parades of elegantly dressed chiefs. Contact the tourist office for exact dates.

Sleeping

Nurom Hotel Annex II (☎ 32324; Nsene Rd; r US\$7.50) This hotel close to the Kejetia Market and lorry station can be noisy, but it's clean and friendly.

Guestline Lodge (☎ 23351; mahesh161us@yahoo.com; r US\$16-30; ☎ ☎) There's no better place in Kumasi for independent travellers on a budget. The VanefSTC station is a block away, there's internet access and there's a relaxing and sunny courtyard. Look first before deciding on a room since they vary in quality, size and appeal.

Sanbra Hotel (☎ 31256; Bogyaw Rd; r US\$18-30; ☎ ☎) Popular with Ghanaians because of its restaurant as much as for its clean but basic tiled-floor rooms; some of the more expensive rooms even have small balconies.

Kumasi Catering Rest House (☎ 26506; Government Rd; r with fan/air-con US\$22/49; ☎) This charming guesthouse set within shady grounds a short walk from the centre has huge rooms furnished with '70s style furniture. Also on site is a popular restaurant with a large menu (mains US\$3.80).

Fosua Hotel (☎ 37382; www.fosuahotel.com; r US\$38; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is the highest quality place to stay in the city centre. Occupying the top floor of the Aseda Complex a block from the VanefSTC station, the rooms here are clean and comfortable.

Four Villages Inn (☎ 22682; www.fourvillages.com; Old Bekwai Rd; s/d US\$60/70; ☎ ☎) Several kilometres south of the centre is this bed and breakfast, equally popular for its four comfortable individually designed rooms as for the garden, terrace and indoor atrium.

Hotel Rexmar (☎ 29111; rexmar@idngh.com; s/d US\$76/90; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Rooms at this low-rise hotel complex south of the Santassi Roundabout aren't exactly luxurious but you do get a private porch and access to one of Kumasi's nicest pools. There's a good restaurant attached.

Eating & Drinking

Vic Baboo's Cafe (Prempeh II Rd; mains US\$2.20-5.50; ☎ from 11am; ☎) Almost every foreigner in Kumasi ends up at this café. It has the biggest cocktail menu in the city, and Indian, Chinese and Ghanaian dishes plus sandwiches and pizza, with several veggie options. Last order taken around 9pm.

Queens Gate Restaurant (Prempeh II Rd; mains US\$4.40) There's no better spot for people-watching in Kumasi than the 3rd-floor balcony at the Queens Gate. Everything from omelettes to soups, salads, burgers and Ghanaian dishes are served.

Sanbra Hotel Restaurant (Bogyaw Rd; mains US\$5; ☎) As far as the centre of Kumasi goes, this restaurant in the hotel of the same name deserves several Michelin stars. It has a huge menu with European, Chinese, Ghanaian, seafood, pizza, lobster, sandwiches etc.

Moti Mahal Restaurant (mains US\$4.40-10; ☎) One of the most expensive restaurants in Kumasi, with a large selection of Indian cuisine, Moti Mahal is off the Southern Bypass Rd.

Vienna City Pub (Harper Rd; ☎) Home sweet home for many expats who can wash away their nostalgia with the pool table, foosball, darts, Guinness and imported beers.

Getting There & Away

Kumasi airport is on the northeastern outskirts of town, about 5km from the centre. Citilink and Antrak have flights between Kumasi and Accra twice a day (US\$63).

The huge Kejetia motor park is the city's main transport hub, from where you can get *tro-tros* to most regional destinations as well as non-VanefSTC buses to Accra and other points south. In addition, transport for Accra (again), Cape Coast, Takoradi and local destinations such as Lake Bosumtwi leave from Asafo station, east of Asafo Roundabout.

The VanefSTC bus station is on Prempeh Rd. Buses to Accra (ordinary/luxury US\$5/7, four hours) leave regularly between 3.30am and 5pm. VanefSTC buses also pass through Cape Coast (US\$7, four hours) on their way to Takoradi (US\$7, five hours). There are two buses a day to Tamale (US\$10, eight hours).

For details of the train service to Takoradi and Accra, see p355.

AROUND KUMASI

Craft Villages

Because of their proximity to Kumasi, the craft villages in the region offer a convenient if also touristy way to experience how some of Ghana's traditional workshops operate.

There are two villages just on the outskirts of Kumasi, on the Mampong road beyond Suame Roundabout. Pankrono, 8km away, is a major pottery centre. One kilometre further is Ahwiaa, known for its woodcarving and aggressive sales approach. Ntonso, 15km further, is the centre of *adinkra* cloth printing. Bonwire, 18km northeast of Kumasi, is the most famous of several nearby villages that specialise in weaving kente cloth.

The easiest way to visit these villages is probably to hire a private taxi for a half day (US\$8) or full day (US\$22). You can also arrange a tour through the Kumasi tourist office.

Lake Bosumtwi

For a break from the bustle and choking pollution of Kumasi, take a trip to tranquil Lake Bosumtwi, 38km southeast of Kumasi. A crater lake, it's ringed by lush green hills in which

you can hike, visiting some of the 20 or so small villages around its perimeter.

To spend the night at the lake, try the **Lake Point Guesthouse** (☎ 220054; r US\$19), set on landscaped grounds that lead down to the lakeshore a few kilometres from Abonu. The spacious and clean rooms are in freestanding bungalows.

Occasional *tro-tros* run direct to Abonu (US\$1.10) from Asafo motor park in Kumasi.

THE NORTH

TAMALE

☎ 071

The fourth-largest city in Ghana and the major transport hub for the north, Tamale tends to be a stopover for travellers on their way to Mole National Park or overland to Burkina Faso but the presence of several good-value hotels makes it a good base to explore other spots in the area.

Sleeping

Catholic Guesthouse (☎ 22265; Gumbihini Rd; r US\$7.50; ☎ ☎) There are no top sheets, no bath towels and no luxury, but who needs it at this price? Rooms surround a leafy garden bar and lounge area. It's about 2.5km north of the centre.

TICCS Guesthouse (☎ 22914; www.ticcs.com/res.htm; Gumbihini Link Rd; r with fan US\$9, s/d with air-con US\$13/15; ☎ ☎) The concrete bungalows are clean and simple and guests have use of the living room, TV and kitchen. The recommended Jungle Bar is on the premises.

Picornah Hotel (☎ 22672; picornahotelgh@yahoo.com; r US\$16; ☎ ☎) The Picorna is the best value in the centre, though the competition is far from fierce. Rooms are comfortable but run-down.

Hotel Mariam (☎ 23548; www.mariamhotel.com.ph; Gumbihini Rd; r US\$50-80; ☎ ☎) Easily the nicest place to stay in Tamale, the Mariam has modern, clean and well-kept rooms and there's a good restaurant. Up the same street as the TICCS Guesthouse.

Eating

Jungle Bar (TICCS Guesthouse, Gumbihini Link Rd) On the grounds of the TICCS Guesthouse, the Jungle Bar is on a leafy balcony with an all-wood bar, cable TV and comfy benches. Serves kebabs, sloppy Joes and hot dogs (US\$1.60 to US\$5.50).

Swad Fast Food (☎ 23588; Gumbihini Rd; mains US\$2.20-9) Don't be fooled by the basic outdoor concrete patio; Swad is the place to eat in Tamale. The menu includes ostrich in black pepper sauce (US\$5), pizza (US\$3.80), lobster thermidor (US\$9) and takeaway lunchboxes.

Sparkles Restaurant (mains US\$2.70; ☎ 8am-8pm) This restaurant in the back of the National Cultural Centre behind the football field has a variety of Ghanaian and Chinese dishes and pizza (US\$4.40).

Getting There & Away

The airport is about 20km north of town, on the road to Bolgatanga; a private taxi there costs about US\$4.40. Antrak flies between Tamale and Accra (US\$144, 1½ hours).

From the VanefSTC station, two buses a day go to Kumasi (US\$10, six hours) and four a day depart for Accra (ordinary/luxury US\$10/16, 12 hours). There's also a Tuesday service to Cape Coast and Takoradi (US\$11, 12 hours).

Tro-tros to Bolgatanga (US\$2.50, 2½ hours) leave frequently, and OSA buses to Mole National Park (US\$3.30, four to six hours) leave in theory at 2.30pm but in practice a lot later. Get to the bus station well before its scheduled departure time to be sure of a seat.

LARABANGA

Larabanga is more than simply the turn-off to Mole National Park. Known mostly for its unusual looking mud-and-pole mosque, originally built in the 15th century (making it the oldest of its kind in Ghana), it provides a good opportunity to see what traditional village life is like.

Look for the Salia Brothers in a small replica of the mosque doubling as a tourist office on the eastern outskirts of the village. They've established a community-based project where you can hire bicycles and stay overnight in their small but well-maintained guesthouse (US\$4.40). Or you can sleep on the roof for star viewing. Meals are available on request.

Daily buses from Tamale to Bole, Wa or Mole National Park stop at Larabanga.

MOLE NATIONAL PARK

☎ 0717

Face-to-face encounters with bus-sized elephants, plus roving gangs of baboons, warthogs, water bucks and antelopes – 90 species of mammals in total – are possibilities at this **national park** (adult/student US\$4.40/2.70, still/video cam-

era fee US\$0.50/2.20), Ghana's largest at 4660 sq km and best as far as wildlife viewing goes. It consists for the most part of flat savannah, with gallery forests along the rivers and streams. There's one main escarpment, on which the motel and park headquarters are situated. The best time for seeing wildlife is during the harmattan season from January to March, but it's worth a visit any time of the year.

The park entrance gate is about 4km north of the turn-off in Larabanga. The park headquarters and the motel are a further 2km into the park. Guided walks are offered twice daily, at 6.30am and 3.30pm, and cost US\$1.60 per person and usually last two hours. You are not permitted to walk (or drive) in the park unless you're accompanied by an armed ranger.

Mole Motel (☎ 22045; camping own/rented tent per person US\$2.20/US\$4.40, d/chalets US\$19/22; 🏠) is a strictly utilitarian boxy structure that does nothing to take advantage of its location. Run-down rooms and indifferent service aside, the views overlooking a waterhole where animals gather is worth the sacrifice. Water and electricity are sometimes in short supply. Alternatively, you can stay in Larabanga and cycle into the park for the day.

If you're hungry, you can either chance the very slow service at the motel restaurant (meals around US\$4.40) or bring your own provisions.

The reserve is 135km west of Tamale; the turn-off to the park is in Larabanga. A daily OSA bus runs from Tamale (US\$4.40, four to six hours), leaving some time after 2.30pm, and arriving at the park motel around 7pm if all goes well. You really need to get your ticket a day in advance or early the morning of the departure to be assured a seat. The same bus returns to Tamale the next day, leaving the park at around 5.30am. The alternative is to take any early-morning bus from Tamale heading to Bole or Wa and get off at Larabanga, then walk, cycle or try to hitch (very difficult). Leaving Mole, your options are to take the OSA bus from the motel to Tamale or to make your way to Larabanga, from where there is infrequent transport in either direction.

WECHIAU COMMUNITY HIPPO SANCTUARY

One of the more remote ecotourism projects in the country, this sanctuary along the Black Volta River, which marks the border with Côte d'Ivoire, is home to hippos as well as a variety

of bird species. Basic guesthouse accommodation is available and you can arrange canoe trips to see the hippos; November through June is the best time to see these prehistoric-looking beasts. Meals can be prepared if you bring your own provisions.

Wechiau village is reached by *tro-tro* (US\$0.70, one hour, 46km) from the main lorry park in Wa. The sanctuary is about 20km from Wechiau. Transport uncertainties mean you really should plan to spend one night at the sanctuary itself rather than try to do it as a day trip from Wa. From Tamale, OSA has a daily service to Wa (US\$5, eight hours), leaving at 5.30am.

BOLGATANGA

☎ 072

To truly appreciate Bolga, as it's known to locals, you probably have to leave Bolga for the surrounding villages. It's the capital of the Upper East Region and the major town between Tamale and the border with Burkina Faso.

The **Tienyine Hotel** (☎ 22355; Starlet 91 St; r US\$26; 🍷) bungalows are the most modern rooms in Bolga and there's a restaurant (mains US\$3.30) attached, though service is glacial. Another option nearby is the large compound of the **Sand Gardens Hotel** (☎ 23464; r with fan US\$14, s/d with air-con US\$16/25; 🍷), part bar, part restaurant, and sometimes loud.

Tro-tros to Tamale (US\$2.50, 2½ hours) leave from the motor park on Zuarungu Rd. From the VanefSTC station on Tamale Rd buses go to Kumasi (US\$7.50, six hours) and Accra (US\$16, 15 hours). Minibuses and *tro-tros* to Paga (US\$0.70, 40 minutes) on the Burkina Faso border leave from a station one block east of the post office.

THE EAST

AKOSOMBO

☎ 0251

Once a boom town housing thousands of workers building the dam that now holds back the world's largest artificial lake, known as Lake Volta, today Akosombo deserves a visit only to take in this engineering marvel, preferably from the vantage of a canoe or ferry on the Volta River.

The Volta River Authority arranges tours of the dam or you can take a half-day booze

cruise like *Dodi Princess* out on the lake on Saturday, Sunday and holidays (adult/child US\$18/11). Contact the **Volta Hotel** (☎ 251731) for reservations; look for signs to the hotel in town.

One of the least expensive though comfortable options in town is the **Adomi Hotel & Restaurant** (☎ 20095; r with fan/air-con US\$13/22), opposite the suspension bridge. **Aylo's Bay** (☎ 20901; www.aylosbay.com; r US\$30), near the Volta Bridge, has several small cottages on shady riverside frontage as well as a garden bar and restaurant. The **Akosombo Continental Hotel** (☎ 20091; r US\$60; 🍷 🍷) has an excellent riverfront location just beyond the suspension bridge, and a swimming pool.

The main transport hub is at Kpong, on the Accra to Ho road 10km south of Atimpoku. Regular *tro-tros* travel between Kpong, Atimpoku and Akosombo. From Accra, *tro-tros* for Kpong/Akosombo (US\$3.30) leave from Tudu station.

WLI (AGUMATSA) FALLS

These spectacular falls, about 20km east of Hohoe, are within the Agumatsa Wildlife Sanctuary. At the Wildlife Office in Wli (pronounced vlee) village, you pay a fee (adult/student US\$3.60/1.80, camera fee US\$0.30); a guide is optional but not needed since it's fairly impossible to lose your way. Wli is an easy day trip from Hohoe, but if you want to stay overnight, the German-owned **Waterfall Lodge** (☎ 0935-20057; www.ghanacamping.com; r US\$12) is only a few hundred metres from the Wildlife Office. There are only a few nice, modern rooms so do your best to make a reservation in advance.

Regular *tro-tros* (US\$0.50, 40 minutes) and shared taxis (US\$0.50, 25 minutes) make the scenic run between Wli and Hohoe throughout the day. If you're heading for Togo, the Ghanaian border post is on the eastern side of Wli.

GHANA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

In general, accommodation in Ghana is not especially good value; it's better suited to people on an expense account. In Accra especially, rooms under US\$40 are generally not well kept or maintained and bring a bit of sticker shock for those reasonably expect-

ing more for their money. Most rates around the country already include 15% tax (12.5% VAT and 2.5% NHIL) and many midrange and top-end hotels include breakfast, though this is usually a very basic coffee, eggs and toast.

Despite the heat, fan-cooled rooms are sometimes preferable since some air-conditioners are so loud as to make sleep near impossible. Unfortunately, owners and staff are usually indifferent and aren't in the habit of going out of their way to make your stay more comfortable.

Off the tourist trail there are few hotels and guesthouses, but it's usually possible to arrange to sleep on a floor or roof somewhere. Most of the ecotourism projects offer overnight stays in simple guesthouses or homestays. Camping is a possibility at national parks and reserves. A few of the coastal forts offer extremely basic guesthouse accommodation.

ACTIVITIES

With its long coastline, one of the main things to do in Ghana is head to the beach where you can surf and boogie-board or simply do nothing at all, which should be considered an activity. However, ask before swimming since currents and undertow make conditions unsafe. Good hiking can be found in the Volta Region around Hohoe in the east of the country and in the Tongo Hills near Bolgatanga (opposite) in the north. For drumming and dancing lessons, contact Big Milly's (p342) or the Academy of African Music & Arts (AAMAL; p342) in Kokrobite, the Oasis Guest House (p343) in Cape Coast, or almost any of the community-based tourism projects around the country.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most stores are open between 9am and 6pm Monday to Friday, with some from 9am to 2pm on Saturday. Very few stores are open on Sunday.

Banks are generally open daily from 8am to 3pm, and are closed on weekends. Most forex bureaux are open limited hours on Saturday. Major hotels have forex facilities open daily.

Most restaurants are open for breakfast, lunch and dinner from the early morning to around 8pm or 9pm; hotel restaurants in Accra and restaurants in Osu stay open later.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Ghana has embassies in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. For details, see the relevant country chapter. Elsewhere, diplomatic missions include the following:

Australia (☎ 02-9283 2961; Ste 1404, Level 14, 370 Pitt St, Sydney 2000)

Canada (☎ 613-236 0871; 1 Clemow Ave, The Glebe, Ottawa, Ont K1S 2A)

France (☎ 01 71 10 14 02; 8 Villa Said, 75116 Paris)

Germany (☎ 0228-35 20 01; Rheinalle 58, 53173 Bonn)

Japan (☎ 03-409 3861; Azabu, PO Box 16, Tokyo)

Netherlands (☎ 70-362 5371; Molenstraat 53, 2513 The Hague)

UK (☎ 020-8342 8686; 104 Highgate Hill, London N6 5HE)

USA Consulate (☎ 212-832 1300; 19 East 47th St, New York, NY 10017); Embassy (☎ 202-686 4520; 3512 International Dr NW, Washington, DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Ghana

All embassies and consulates listed are in Accra (area code ☎ 021). Most are open from 8.30am to 3.30pm Monday through Friday.

PRACTICALITIES

- The national *Daily Graphic* is probably the best of the English-language newspapers available, with reasonably good coverage of Ghanaian, African and international news.
- GTV is the national channel, available throughout the country. In Accra and Kumasi, you can also get TV3, which is very similar. GTV has nightly news in English at 7pm, and shows a selection of educational programmes, slapstick comedy shows (in Twi) and American soaps. On Sunday, sermons and gospel singing take centre stage. DSTV is the main satellite channel.
- Most radio programmes are at least partly in English. Talk radio rules here, and the shows make fascinating listening. The national radio (FM 95.7) has world news in English on the hour, every hour.
- Most electrical outlets are UK-style, with three square prongs, though adapters are easy to find.

Australia (Map p336; ☎ 777080; www.ghana.embassy.gov.au; 2 Second Rangoon Close, Cantonments) Australian High Commission.

Benin (Map p336; ☎ 774860; Switchback Lane, Cantonments)

Burkina Faso (Map p338; ☎ 221988; 2nd Mango Tree Ave, Asylum Down; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri)

Canada (Map p336; ☎ 228555; fax 773792; 46 Independence Ave, Sankara interchange)

Côte d'Ivoire (☎ 774611; 9 18th Lane, Osu; ☎ 9am-2:30pm Mon-Thu)

Denmark (☎ 226972; 67 Isert Rd, 8th Ave Extension) Near World Bank office.

France (Map p336; ☎ 228571; www.ambafrance-gh.org; 12th Rd, Kanda) Off Liberation Ave.

Germany (Map p338; ☎ 221311; geremb@ghana.com; 6 Ridge Rd, North Ridge)

Japan (Map p336; ☎ 775616; fax 775951; 8 Josef Broz Tito Ave, Cantonments)

Liberia (☎ 775641; Odoikwao St, Airport Residential Area)

Mali (Map p338; ☎ 775160; Liberia Rd, West Ridge)

Netherlands (Map p336; ☎ 231991; nlgovacc@ncs.com.gh; 89 Liberation Ave, Sankara Circle)

Nigeria (Map p336; ☎ 776158; fax 774395; 5 Josef Broz Tito Ave, Cantonments)

Togo (Map p336; ☎ 777950; Togo House, Cantonments Circle, Cantonments)

UK (Map p336; ☎ 221665; fax 221745; 1 Osu Link, Ringway Estate) British High Commission.

USA (Map p336; ☎ 776601; www.usembassy.org.gh; cnr 10th La & 3rd St, Osu)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Ghana observes the Muslim festivals of Eid al-Fitr, at the end of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha; both are determined by the lunar calendar.

Ghana has colourful festivals and events, including Cape Coast's Fetu Afahye Festival (first Saturday of September), Elmina's Bakatue Festival (first Tuesday in July), the Fire Festival of the Dagomba people in Tamale and Yendi (dates vary according to the Muslim calendar), the Feko festival in Sandema near Navrongo (17 to 18 December) and various year-round Akan celebrations in Kumasi. Ghana's most famous festival – Aboakyer (Deer Hunt) – is celebrated in Winneba on the first weekend in May. Accra's tourist office sells an informative booklet on Ghana's festivals. Panafest is celebrated annually in Cape Coast, Accra and Kumasi.

HOLIDAYS

Public holidays include the following:

New Year's Day 1 January

Independence Day 6 March

Easter March/April

Labour Day 1 May

Africa Day 25 May

Republic Day 1 July

Farmers' Day 1st Friday in December

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

INTERNET ACCESS

There are internet cafés in all major towns. Connection speeds vary but not surprisingly they tend to be slower outside the larger urban areas. Average rates per hour are US\$0.70 to US\$1.10.

MONEY

The unit of currency is the cedi (C). There are C1000, C2000, C5000, C10,000 and C20,000 notes, as well as C100, C200, C250 and C500 coins.

The best currencies to bring are US dollars, UK pounds or euros. Barclays and Standard Chartered Banks exchange cash and well-recognised brands of travellers cheques without a commission.

Foreign-exchange (forex) bureaux are dotted around most major towns, though there are fewer in the north. They usually offer a slightly better rate than the banks and stay open later. However, they don't generally change travellers cheques.

Most Barclays and Standard Chartered Banks throughout the country have ATMs where you can get a cash advance in cedis (up to about C800,000 or US\$80) with Visa or MasterCard.

Credit cards, generally only Visa and MasterCard, are accepted by major hotels and travel agencies.

TELEPHONE

Every town and city has plenty of private 'communication centres' where you can make national and international calls. Little streetside tables festooned with signs announcing which cell-phone providers they can call are everywhere. These generally cost from US\$0.20 to US\$0.30 per minute. Cell phones are becoming more and more common and are the best way to communicate within the country.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The website of the **Ghana Tourist Board** (www.ghana.tourism.gov.gh) has some useful information.

Within Ghana, the tourist board has a network of offices in the major regional capitals. The amount of information available is limited. Opening hours tend to be somewhat erratic and most offices are closed on Saturday and Sunday.

The **Nature Conservation Research Centre** (NCRC; www.ncrc-ghana.org), one of the main players behind the country's burgeoning community-run tourism efforts, has information on all of its projects.

VISAS

Everyone except nationals of Ecowas (Economic Community of West African States) countries needs a visa to enter the country, which until recently could only be obtained before arriving in Ghana. Now, however, nationals of most countries can receive a tourist visa on arrival at the Kotaka airport in Accra for US\$100, though it's not a convenient option if you're arriving late at night. Visas allow a stay of 60 days and can be single or multiple entry.

You can get visas in many countries in West Africa or elsewhere. Visa applications usually take three days to process, and four photos are required. You often also need an onward ticket. In the UK, single-/multiple-entry visas cost UK£30/40. In the USA, they cost US\$50/80.

If necessary, visas can be extended at the **Immigration Office** (☎ 021-221667 ext 215) in Accra near the Sankara interchange. Applications are accepted between 8.30am and noon Monday to Friday. You need two photos, a letter stating why you need an extension and an onward ticket out of Ghana. Your passport is retained for the two weeks it takes to process the application.

Visas for Onward Travel

Visas for the following countries are available from embassies in Accra (see p351):

Benin Visas cost US\$25/50 for one-/three-month multiple entry and are issued within 48 hours.

Burkina Faso Visas cost US\$40 (not payable in cedis) for three months and are issued within 24 hours; three photos required.

Côte d'Ivoire Month-long visas costs US\$4 (payable in cedis) for Australians and Americans or US\$10 for British nationals; issued in 48 hours; need two photos.

Togo Visas cost US\$20 cash (payable in dollars only) for multiple entry and are issued the same day if you apply in the morning; three photos required.

TRANSPORT IN GHANA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Ghana's only international airport is Kotaka international airport in Accra. At the time of research, the national carrier Ghana International Airways only had flights into London. North American Airlines has one nonstop flight a week between New York City and Accra.

Airlines servicing Ghana include the following:

Afriqiyah Airways (8U; ☎ 252465) Flights to Europe with stopover in Tripoli, Libya; office at Accra airport.

Air Ivoire (VU; ☎ 241461) Hub: Abidjan. Office at Accra airport.

Alitalia (AZ; Map p338; ☎ 239315; Ring Rd Central, Asylum Down, Accra) Hub: Rome.

American Airlines (www.aa.com)

Antrak (Map p336; ☎ 769458; Antrak House, Danquah Circle, Osu, Accra) Domestic airline that also flies to Ouagadougou, (Burkina Faso) and Lagos (Nigeria).

British Airways (BA; Map p338; ☎ 240386; Kojo Thompson Rd, Adabraka, Accra) Hub: London Heathrow.

EgyptAir (MS; ☎ 773537; Ring Rd East, Osu, Accra) Hub: Cairo.

Emirates (EK; ☎ 238921; Meridian House, Ring Rd Central, Accra) Hub: Dubai. Four flights a week connecting Accra and Dubai with a stopover in Lagos.

Ghana International Airways (GH; ☎ 221000; www.fly-ghana.com; Silver Star Tower, Airport City, PMB 78, Kotoka International Airport) Hub: Accra. At time of research Ghana International only flew to London.

Ivory Coast Airways Office at Accra airport.

Kenya Airways (KQ; ☎ 444301) Hub: Nairobi. Office at Accra airport.

KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines (KL; Map p336; ☎ 224020; Ring Rd Central, Accra) Hub: Amsterdam.

Lufthansa Airlines (LH; ☎ 243893; Fidelity House, Accra) Hub: Frankfurt. Off Ring Rd Central.

Slo Air International (☎ 3166206; No 3 Aviation Rd, Accra) Flies to Monrovia (Liberia), Freetown (Sierra Leone), Banjul (The Gambia) and Dakar (Senegal); office at the airport.

South African Airways (SA; Map p338; ☎ 230722; Ring Rd Central, Asylum Down, Accra) Hub: Johannesburg.

Virgin Nigeria (VK; Map p336; ☎ 771700; www.virgin-nigeria.com; La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra) Hub: Lagos.

Land

BURKINA FASO

Between Accra and Ouagadougou, the usual route is via Kumasi, Tamale, Bolgatanga,

Paga and Pô. A direct VanefSTC bus runs to Ouagadougou from Accra (US\$29, 24 hours) once daily Monday to Saturday and from Kumasi (US\$21, 20 hours) every Wednesday evening; most people do the trip in stages. From Bolgatanga, there are frequent *tro-tros* to the border at Paga (US\$1.10, 40 minutes), from where you can get onward transport to Pô and Ouagadougou.

You can also enter Burkina Faso from the northwest corner of Ghana, crossing between Tumu and Léo or from Hamale or Lawra and onto Bobo-Dioulasso. You can reach Tumu most easily from Bolgatanga, Hamale from Bolgatanga or Wa, and Lawra from Wa.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

VanefSTC buses run between Accra and Abidjan (US\$12, 12 hours) via Elubo once daily Monday to Friday, leaving in the early morning. The Ecowas Express, run by STIF, a company from Côte d'Ivoire, does three runs a week between Neoplan motor park in Accra and Abidjan. From Takoradi, Peugeot bush taxis make a daily trip to Abidjan.

Another border crossing lies between Bole and Bouna, though this involves a chartered canoe trip across the Black Volta River.

TOGO

Tro-tros and buses regularly ply the coastal road between Accra and Aflao (all about US\$3.30, three hours). VanefSTC buses leave from the smaller Tudu bus station in Accra (US\$5, four times a day). The border at Aflao is open from 6am to 10pm daily but you should cross between 9am and 5pm if you need a Togolese visa at the border. Public transport from Ghana doesn't cross the border, which is only 2km from central Lomé.

GETTING AROUND

Air

Two domestic airlines, **Citylink** (☎ 312001; www.citylink.com.gh) and **Antrak** (Accra Map p336; ☎ 21-765337; Antrak House, Danquah Circle, Osu; Kumasi ☎ 51-41296; Tamale ☎ 71-91075) operate in Ghana. Both have two flights daily between Accra and Kumasi (US\$60 to US\$80, 45 minutes), and Antrak has flights on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday between Accra and Tamale (US\$144, 1½ hours).

Boat

A passenger boat, the *Yapei Queen*, runs along Lake Volta between Akosombo and Yeji, stop-

ping at the town of Kete-Krachi and a few villages along the way. In theory it leaves the port at Akosombo at 4pm on Monday and arrives in Yeji on Wednesday morning; in practice the departure and arrival times are more fluid. The southbound service leaves Yeji around 4pm on Wednesday and arrives in Akosombo on Friday morning. Tickets cost US\$11/5.50 in 1st/2nd class, and food and drinks are available on board. If you want one of the two 1st-class cabins (recommended), you have to reserve at least two weeks in advance; call ☎ 0251-20686 in Akosombo to make a booking.

Bus

The best bus service in the country is provided by VanefSTC, the old State Transport Corporation now owned by Greyhound. There are two classes of bus: ordinary and luxury. The latter have air-con and are newer and more comfortable. Compared to other transport in the region it's fairly reliable, though late departures are all too common. Expect significant delays leaving from the Tudu station in Accra and on any of the less regular routes. Buses link the major centres, including Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi, Cape Coast, Tamale and Bolgatanga. Other operators, which may have the only buses on some routes (such as between Tamale and Mole National Park), include OSA, Kingdom Transport Services (KTS), City Express and GPRTU. The buses tend to be older and less comfortable.

Taxis

Within towns and on some shorter routes between towns, shared taxis (called passenger or line taxis) are the usual form of transport. Line taxis run on fixed routes, along which they stop to pick up and drop off passengers.

Private or 'dropping' taxis don't have meters and rates are negotiable. It's best to ask a local in advance for the average cost between two points. Taxis can be chartered for an agreed period of time from one hour to a day for a negotiable fee.

Tro-tros

Tro-tro is a catch-all category that embraces any form of transport that's not a bus or taxi. They cover all major and many minor routes and, without them, Ghana would come to a standstill. They don't work to a set timetable, but leave when full. You can pick them up any-

where along a route and they're extremely cheap (about US\$0.01 per kilometre). Most fares are under a dollar or two but frequently change by small amounts. For long journeys, though, buses are more comfortable and safer.

Train

Ghana's railway links Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi but the trains are much slower and aren't any cheaper than motorised transport. There are daily passenger services in either direction between Accra and Kumasi

(US\$4.40/2.70 in 1st/2nd class, about 12 hours) and a nightly service between Accra and Takoradi, which costs about the same and takes at least 12 hours, but these are really only for masochists and train enthusiasts. However, the line between Kumasi and Takoradi (US\$4.40/2.70 in 1st/2nd class) is worth considering. On this line, there are two trains daily, leaving at 6am and 8.30pm. The journey in theory takes eight hours but it's usually more like 12 in practice, especially on the night train.